

Middle School Initiative

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One of the most exciting ventures for Civil Air Patrol (CAP) in many years is its Middle School Initiative. The program, which receives oversight and funding from the Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) Program, places CAP squadrons or flights from a squadron into schools during the day or as an after-school activity. This innovative attempt to reach students in a manner that teaches leadership, aerospace education, respect, manners and accountability while developing their potential as tomorrow's leaders, is achieving growing success in both inner city and rural schools.

The middle school program began in 1993 in Houston TX. It was a joint Adopt-A-School program with the Army Reserve, CAP and Briarwood School under the Drug Demand Reduction Program. This program served as the 21st test unit to the CAP National DDR Program as it was initiated earlier and had its own funding. The success of placing the CAP program into a school for "learning-challenged youth" proved that all students were able to assimilate more when motivated. Also, access to school facilities multiplied the ability of the squadron to conduct many varied activities.

The CAP DDR Program serves as a sponsor for all school programs if the units are within 30 miles of an Air Force, Air Reserve or Air National Guard base. This initiative meets the Air Force requirement of reaching family members and their associates. All other school programs receive guidance and curriculum assistance as needed.

The first CAP-sponsored middle school program was formed in 1994 at Wilson Middle School just outside the gates of Kirtland AFB NM. Initially formed with donated uniforms from the Navy, this concept was later assimilated as a CAP DDR initiative to fill the leadership/citizenship training void. Starting with one school, the program has now expanded to 50 students in three middle schools. The CAP program is conducted as part of the Social Studies class, which incorporates the standard cadet program curriculum. Cadets now wear the CAP uniform to school one day a week, much like the JROTC. This model has resulted in a draft Memorandum of Understanding between CAP's New Mexico Wing and the Albuquerque Public Schools. For the first time in school history, 16 of their student-cadets have earned 4-year scholarships (approximately \$10,000 annually) to the New Mexico Military Institute. Plus, numerous cadets now belong to various JROTC units throughout the city.

The Florida Wing established a pilot program working with public middle schools to enhance the 1995-96 Safe School Appropriation by the Florida Legislature. The Coral Springs chief of police who said, "It's an activity-filled environment that attracts young people to do positive things that benefit themselves and their community" best sums up the program. The young people who go through the program definitely develop as excellent role models. They learn to be leaders and responsible young adults who are goal oriented and respectful of others. They tend to develop as very positive youth leaders who contribute to our community."

The Florida program currently has a total of six schools in Bradenton County with 130 cadets. One of the true successes was at the Wing Selection Board for National Special Activities, where

a cadet, with just one-year complete in the middle school program, was chosen as the number-one selection for the entire state of Florida!

The second oldest middle school program is in South Carolina where they recruited more than 340 cadets over the past 4 years. This program is presently in 13 schools operating around Columbia SC, Shaw AFB and Charleston AFB. To increase retention and ensure individual success, the wing annually holds a “boot camp” or orientation-training weekend to complete standardized, concentrated basic-cadet training for all new cadets entering the school program. The program has trained more than 290 cadets in the first 3 years and represents the majority of cadets in the South Carolina Wing.

The most recent large-scale attempt of the after-school/inner-city initiative is in the Chicago Public Schools. They have 24 schools (22 middle school and 2 high schools) participating in the program with 200 active members and 100 pending memberships today. Officials expect by the end of the school year, more than 500 students will be enrolled. Additionally, the program conducts an external aerospace education program to another 5,000 students throughout the city. This is a joint effort between the CAP, the Chicago Public Schools and numerous other organizations. Note: Twelve students have joined the Illinois Air National Guard while attending college as a result of aerospace education received from CAP. They fully expect to recruit 18-24 for the air guard at the close of the current school year.

Other operational programs include: four schools in Prince George County, MD with 251 students, one school in Baltimore, MD with 18 cadets, the Woodland Middle School in East Point GA with 103 cadets, two schools with 20 cadets in Milwaukee WI and one school each in St Louis MO with 18 students and NJ with 35 cadets. Future programs are being considered in New Hampshire, Mississippi, Texas, Colorado and Tennessee.

Statement from ONDCP: Prevention is the ultimate key to reversing the upward trend in the use of drugs and empowering communities to address their drug problems. Central to this effort is the development and implementation of initiatives to prevent illicit drug use, including casual use by youth and other high-risk populations. The most effective strategies for preventing drug use, keeping drugs out of neighborhoods and schools, and providing a safe and secure environment for all people are cooperative efforts that mobilize and involve all elements of a community.

As you can tell, CAP's Middle School Initiative/Drug Demand Reduction Program is very much on track and in-line with the most up-to-date and progressive policies addressing this need in our nation. Basically, what CAP offers through its youth program is long-term (8 years) mentoring, teaching of life skills and a path with a guiding hand to success. The bottom line: CAP offers America's youth hope for a successful future ... and shows them how to accomplish this!